

TMC leader returns Rs 2.25 lakh 'cut money'

TNN | Jun 26, 2019, 09:40 AM IST



TMC leader returns Rs 2.25 lakh 'cut money'

KOLKATA: A Trinamool Congress booth president marked a first in West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee's "return cut money" drive by giving back Rs 2.25 lakh he had taken from labourers in Chatra village of Birbhum district. "Cut money" is commission charged by some party workers from people who want government scheme benefits.

The return of "cut money" came four days after Mamata warned party workers involved in "corrupt practices" to return "cut money" or face police action. Mukherjee's initiative shows that the CM's diktat has triggered a social churning on the issue.

As many as 141 men received Rs 1,600 each on Tuesday from Trilochan Mukherjee, who had been denying them payment of wages for the past eight months. TMC, however, denied it was cut money. "Those who work for three or four days earn a small amount as wages. We therefore decided to club these small amounts with that earned by those who work for 20-25 days at a stretch. The money is credited to the big account-holders. We then withdraw the excess amount and distribute them among the small beneficiaries, going by the work register. This is not returning cut money," said Trinamool's Suri Block II president Nurul Islam.

Villager Subodh Bagdi said, "The booth president used to browbeat us whenever we asked for payments. He withdrew from the bank the entire amount of Rs 2.40 lakh the government had sent to our village for drainage

repair. Now, he has succumbed to pressure when all of us gave him an ultimatum over payment of wages.” Bengal BJP president and newly elected MP Dilip Ghosh spoke on this in his maiden speech in Parliament on Tuesday. “The CM has taken cognisance of the cut money without which nothing moves in Bengal,” he said. BJP leaders said the development in Birbhum was a vindication of PM Narendra Modi’s complaint against “tolabaji tax (extortion tax)” during his election campaign in Bengal.

The issue also reverberated in the Bengal assembly on Tuesday when the opposition Left and Congress members demanded the creation of a commission to probe “cut money” cases. It was rejected by TMC. The issue, however, has gone far beyond the legislature, with people across the state demanding return of cut money. More than a hundred auto operators mobbed Tarakeswar police station on Tuesday demanding return of cut money they paid allegedly to Srikanta Goswami, husband of TMC councillor Putul Goswami. The agitators told police that each of them had to give Rs 20,000-25,000 to the Trinamool leader.